

Edwardsville's boys soccer team has high expectations with much depth back

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Wednesday was the first day of preseason practice for IHSA fall athletic programs other than football, and **Edwardsville's soccer team** took to the pitch with much enthusiasm for the upcoming season.

Last year's Tigers finished the season 12-7-4 after they had gotten off to an 8-0-3 start, a season that saw them win their own IHSA Class 3A Regional title in a shootout over O'Fallon before falling to Quincy in the Collinsville Sectional.

“We utilized our 25 contact days (allowed by IHSA rules during the summer school break) – not all of them – but we had a really fantastic summer scrimmage,” said **Tiger coach Mark Heiderscheid**. “For us, it's really exciting because, in terms of depth, perhaps as much depth as we've had since the early 2000s. We've got 27 freshmen out and we're looking at some 55 players other than the freshmen; that's a really good turnout. It kind of shows of where things are at in terms of Edwardsville.

“We always keep a large contingent because depth is enormous. Every year, you'd hate to think anyone's going to get hurt, but inevitably at times, you have to deal with things and I like using a lot of players. It allows you to rest people, allows you to give people mental rest, it gets you through a season if you can sub players in and out because then you're not forced to use them for too many minutes.

“This year, we have so many players who are similar in terms of ability; our front six, you can interchange a lot of players and that's going to be great for us. There's a lot of pieces that make this year look pretty good. That being said, every year there's always hopes and expectations, and soccer's one of those sports where there's always going to be high moments and low moments. Look at last year, we started out the first 12 games, we didn't lose very many games at all, but we were having moments where it was tight.

“We get a couple of kids injured like (Matt) Busse (who had a concussion) and it kind of derailed things; we were trying to put a lot of pieces together and as a result, we couldn't score (the Tigers went into the postseason on a 0-3-1 slump where they couldn't find the back of the net before winning their regional and moving into the sectional).”

One thing that Heiderschied is excited about is the team's character. “This group's character is fantastic. We've got kids...who give every bit of their energy towards the game and they've got all elements in terms of athleticism, they're great kids, very coachable. We've got so much going.”

The Tigers will open the season with a severe test against traditional St. Louis-area Chaminade on the road. “We'll find out real fast (where the Tigers stand) when we play Chaminade (Aug. 23 on the road).”

The Tigers' Southwestern Conference opener comes Aug. 25 at Granite City's Gene Baker Field, then the Alton Tournament takes place Aug. 26-27 before EHS' home opener against Belleville East Aug. 30. Edwardsville will face other top St. Louis-area teams like DeSmet (at home Sept. 19), St. Mary's (on the road Oct. 1) and CBC (on the road Oct. 5) heading into the IHSA playoffs beginning Oct. 18; the IHSA Class 3A state finals will take place Nov. 4-5 at Hoffman Estates High School in the Chicago suburbs.

